

## ON TRACK WITH MDT

As of last month, spring is officially here. That, combined with the recent warm weather, means that MDT's road construction season will soon be in full gear.

As we ramp up for the construction season, I want to remind everyone traveling Montana's roads of the importance of slowing down through work zones. This issue is of such importance that the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA) have joined forces with the American Road and Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA), the Associated General Contractors (AGC), state DOTs and contractors associations across the country for the fifth annual National Work Zone Awareness Week. The event is scheduled for April 4-10, 2004.



National Work Zone Awareness Week takes place in April because this is an appropriate time for the nation to focus on the start of the construction season and the risks of speeding in work zones, especially with the increased traffic that summer and fall bring.

Nationally, the number of persons killed in construction and maintenance work zone crashes has gone from 717 in 1996 to 1,181 in 2002. In Montana, the number of fatalities in motor vehicle crashes in work zones from 1997 to 2002 was as follows: six, three, two, three, six and three. As if that weren't bad enough, over 40,000 people are injured in work zone crashes in this country each year.

In an effort to help the public understand what it's like to work on our highways, FHWA Administrator Mary Peters will hold this year's national work zone awareness press conference on a road shoulder in a work zone on Interstate 95 in Virginia. The purpose is to show motorists what construction workers' "offices" are like and to remind travelers to slow down in construction work zones.

Here in Montana, we're reaching out via public service announcements, Transportation Awareness Program booths and presentations, work zone signage and articles such as the one being presented here. All of our efforts contain the same message: *Drive slow. Think fast* whenever you're approaching or traveling through a work zone.

In closing, I would like to offer you the following tips to live by:

1. STAY ALERT. Dedicate your full attention to the roadway.
2. PAY CLOSE ATTENTION. Signs and work zone flaggers save lives.
3. TURN ON YOUR HEADLIGHTS. Workers and other motorists must see you.
4. DON'T TAILGATE.
5. DON'T SPEED. Note the posted speed limits in and around the work zone.
6. KEEP UP WITH THE TRAFFIC FLOW.

7. DON'T CHANGE LANES IN THE WORK ZONE.
8. MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS. Avoid changing radio stations and using mobile phones while driving in a work zone.
9. EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED. Keep an eye out for workers and their equipment.
10. BE PATIENT. Remember that work zone crew members are working to improve your future ride.

By working together, we can all stay alive and “on track.” Drive safely, everyone!

Dave Galt  
Director